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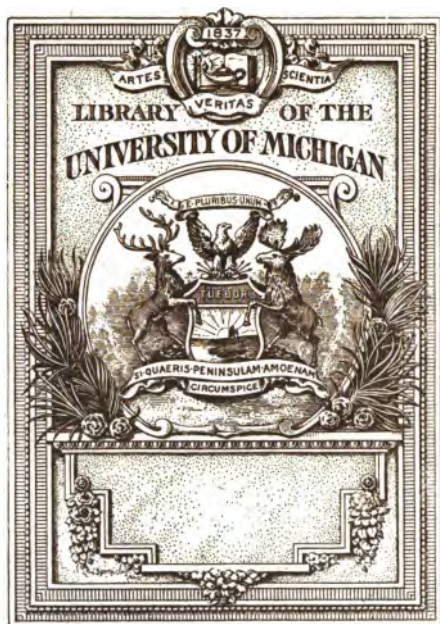
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AN ARGUMENT

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FOR

AN EIGHT-HOUR LAW

BY

WALTER S. LOGAN

Compliments of

Walter S. Logan

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AN ARGUMENT
FOR
AN EIGHT-HOUR LAW.

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BY

WALTER S. LOGAN.

IT may be remarked that I have chosen my title with some deliberation. The argument is for "*an* eight-hour law," not "*any* eight-hour law," or *the* usual eight-hour law over which there is the periodical contention in our legislatures. A particular form of such legislation is advocated which seems to me to combine more merits and less objections than do the statutes ordinarily drawn, having for their object a limitation of the hours of labor.

The statute which I propose would read something like this :

"SECTION 1.—It shall be unlawful for any person to habitually work for wages in any factory, mine, or workshop in this State, wherein more than six workmen are usually employed, or to employ others so to work, more than eight hours out of each twenty-four.

"SEC. 2.—Any person offending against any of the provisions of the preceding section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor."

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It will be observed that this proposed statute is in some respects quite radical, and in others very conservative.

It is radical in that it does not stop, as such statutes usually do, with declaring that a given number of hours shall constitute a day's labor, leaving a man to perform as many days' labor as he chooses during each twenty-four hours, but it goes to the root of the matter and declares that such employment is contrary to the social and economic polity of the State and shall be altogether unlawful. And further, it lays its restrictions and imposes its penalties alike upon the employer and the employed. It would be as unlawful to work under the prohibited conditions as it would be to employ others to work.

It is, for this sort of legislation, conservative in the following respects :

(1) It restricts only *habitual* employment of the kind specified.

It does not interfere with the free action of the employer and employed, in an emergency. Occasional work or employment for ten, twelve, sixteen, or twenty-four hours in the day, to meet some pressing necessity or urgent demand, would not be unlawful. It may be urged that the word "habitual" is too indefinite to be used in a statute ; but I do not think it would be found to be so in practice. In case of a prosecution under this law, a court and jury would have to decide, in each case, whether the employment was occasional and temporary, to meet exceptional conditions, or whether it was a persistent but covert attempt to violate the spirit of the statute ; and this is as it should be.

Good faith on the part of the employer and employed would always meet with a proper consideration, but attempted evasions would be dangerous.

(2) It is conservative in that it confines its restrictions to labor in a "factory, mine, or work-shop."

I am by no means sure that I have fixed the proper and final limitation to the scope of the statute. I hope and expect that it will in time be extended further and given a wider scope, and that there are other fields of industry in which it will finally prove an ameliorating factor. For instance, if any one proposes that it shall be extended to transportation companies, and shows that this can be done without interfering with the public transportation service, I should be inclined to

favor his amendment. Very likely it might be applied with public benefit to some of the building trades. Still other industries naturally suggest themselves in which it might be useful. But I think that he often makes best time in the end who at first goes slowly, and I would not undertake too much at once. I should rather leave something for future legislators who could have before them the results of the working of the proposed law in a limited field, and could be guided as to its further extension and development by experience and observation more than is possible for those who have to hew out the first path in a new direction. In actual practice I do not think it would ever be necessary to carry the law to its full logical conclusion. I believe the benefits to be derived from its operation, even on a limited scale, would be so apparent and the superior condition of the workmen in those industries subject to its operation would be so manifest that other laborers would join the movement, of their own volition, with such unanimity that the reform would be completed by its own energy before the Legislature could bring itself into a state of mind to thoroughly complete its work. The last citadels would surrender long before the guns could be trained upon them.

(3) It is conservative in that it restricts only "work for wages."

There is no attempt to limit the number of hours during which a man may work on his own account. The object of the statute is not the private benefit of the individual but the general advantage of the community. It is not conceived in a paternal spirit, with the object of protecting a man from the results of his own misjudgment ; but simply to enforce such general regulations as shall be for the common good.

(4) It is conservative in that it applies only to factories, mines, or workshops, *wherein more than six workmen are usually employed.*

Its intention is to discriminate in favor of the small establishment against the larger one. It hinders a man neither from working on his own account as long as he chooses, nor from employing a limited number of assistants in connection with his own labor. It is in the small workshop that the proprietor usually labors with his men ; the only difference between the "boss" and the workmen being that his is the directing mind, and that they receive fixed wages instead of his,

perhaps more uncertain, compensation. There is no more wholesome kind of industry than this, and nothing should be done by law to interfere with it. If it were necessary, in order to prevent any such possible interference, to raise the minimum number of employees in the establishments to be exempted from the operation of the statute, I would do so.

(5) It is conservative in that it does not attempt to fix the particular hours during which the work shall be done.

In those industries, where it is necessary that the labor shall be continued during the whole twenty-four hours, it can be done by the usual three shifts. All the statute does is to limit the aggregate number of hours in each twenty-four during which the work of any particular employee shall be continued.

(6) It is conservative in that it does not attempt in any way to interfere with the question of wages.

That is a matter to be settled by private contract, as now, between the employer and the employed. Any attempt to regulate wages by statute is usually ineffectual, and attended with evil results. This is equally true whether the legislation have for its object the keeping down of wages—as was the case in England in olden times when Parliament, chosen by the landlords, fixed the maximum amount which agricultural laborers should receive,—or whether it is intended to advance wages, as modern legislators, dependent for their election upon the votes of laboring men, are supposed to desire.

When you have given the laborer a fair show, put him on an even footing with his employer so far as relates to the conditions under which the contract is made, and given to each side proper facilities for the enforcement of the contract, you have done about all that statutes can be expected to do in the way of wage-regulation.

The object of the proposed legislation is to provide a *radical remedy* for certain existing evils, but to do so by the most *conservative methods*, and to get the best possible results with the least friction and disturbance.

I call my paper an argument, and that is all I claim it to be. I speak as an advocate and not as a judge. I do not desire to say, or pretend that I am saying, all that can be said upon both sides of the

question, and I certainly do not expect to speak the final word on either side. I will not even go so far as to assert that my own mind has reached an irrevocable conclusion. I am, however, thoroughly convinced that on the question of legislation concerning the limitation of the hours of labor there is a good deal to be said upon both sides, and that it is a question worthy of the calm, careful, and deliberate investigation and consideration of all those who have the best interests of humanity at heart. I am simply giving you, to-night, my argument upon one side of that question, and I shall be equally happy whether the argument stands or falls under the supreme tests of criticism, objection, opposition, and experience, so long only as the truth finally triumphs, and that policy is ultimately adopted which brings most happiness to the human race, and makes life upon this planet best worth living. If I am right, it is well; if wrong, you will set me right, and it will be just as well.

The objection to the proposed public polity which comes most promptly is from the lips of those who are disciples of Spencer, Mill, and Jefferson, and who have been educated to worship at the shrine of *laissez faire*.

The gospel of *laissez faire* may be stated briefly thus :

Individual liberty is the paramount consideration, and individual effort the paramount force. Leave everything to individual action and individual choice, and let the hand of the state be felt only when individual liberty itself is in danger.

Thomas Jefferson, very tersely and trenchantly, phrased it thus : "That government is best which governs least." John Stuart Mill said that the highest possible virtue in a legislator was the habit of voting "No." Herbert Spencer, in his early days, wrote volumes, whose style and logic are alike incomparably superb, and from the fascination of which no student can escape, to show that most of the ills of our social condition are produced by state interference, and that our best hope of amelioration is in larger individual liberty.

Huxley wittily says that the system of government which this school of philosophers advocates is neither a monarchy, an aristocracy, nor a democracy, but an astinocracy, a government of the policeman, and

that the only function that it leaves to the state is to hang murderers, jail thieves, and restrain assault and battery.

The fault of the philosophy is that it makes too much of the individual and too little of the social organism, that it counts humanity as separate peas in a pot, each a sufficient pea unto itself ; whereas in truth and in fact the individual in our developed and complex civilized life is rather like a pebble in the conglomerate rock, having an individual existence, it is true, but firmly cemented and incorporated into the larger mass which surrounds it, so that the pebble is subordinate to the rock ; or like a bone in the human organism, by itself only so much lime and phosphorus, but in its living place a potent and indispensable factor in the grandest and best result of all creation. Individual liberty is a very good subject for a Fourth of July oration, a good enough framework on which to hang a mantle of effervescent eloquence, but when you come down to actual life, in these closing years of the nineteenth century, the individual by himself does n't amount to much. The only liberty that he would have if he persisted in being left entirely alone, would be the liberty to starve and die. Shut a man off, here, in New York, from all communication with his fellows and all dependence upon them, and there would be a funeral inside of a week. The individual of the present generation is very far from an independent being ; on the contrary, he is dependent for everything. He is dependent upon the community in which he lives for the food that he eats, the clothes that he wears, and the house that shelters his head. The water that he drinks comes to him in Croton water pipes, owned by the public in its corporate capacity. The very air that he breathes, but for the restraining power of society, might soon become tainted, unwholesome, full of noxious vapors, and poisonous. All the pleasures which make life worth living, all the culture which elevates man above the brutes, all that makes him lord of creation and gives him a hope of immortality, he owes to his social environment. The doctrine of evolution has in many respects superseded the teachings of the catechism, and we are learning in these later years that it was not in the image of his Maker that Troglodyte man was *made*, but into that image has he *grown* ; and so grown only in the environment of his fellow-men, with their aid and under their inspiration.

Nevertheless, if we go back to the time when the disciples of *laissez faire* began their evangelical work, I have a very soft spot in my heart for them and for the doctrine which they preached so earnestly.

The middle of the last century saw despotism, everywhere throughout the world, triumphant. The divine right of kingship seemed to be so firmly established that there was no escape but for the people to submit. Even in England, where they had cut off the head of one king and driven another into exile, the House of Hanover seemed to sit on the throne as firmly as had the Tudors and Stuarts of earlier days. The rebellion in Scotland had been suppressed with a firm and cruel hand ; the Pretender was driven from the kingdom and his supporters drawn and quartered ; while Parliament, which had once had the courage to demand from the unwilling hands of King John the Great Charter of Anglican liberty, which had so often stood as the bulwark of freedom against oppression, and in which had sat such men as Hampden, Halifax, and Somers as leaders of the people, had become, under the tutelage of Walpole—from whom even William M. Tweed might well have taken lessons—an association of rotten boroughs, unrepresentative of the people, irresponsible to their wants, and basely corrupted by the influences with which royalty surrounded them, and the allurements with which the Crown tempted them to their destruction. France was still ruled by the worst of the Bourbons, possessing all the absolutism and all the vices of their ancestors without their redeeming intelligence. Spain had all of the French Bourbonism, made infinitely worse by the environment of Spanish bigotry. The Bishop of Rome sat firmly in his pontifical chair, controlling the consciences of half the world and suppressing with a firm hand all intellectual yearnings. In Germany there was scarcely a representative body worthy of the name. Russia was the Russia of to-day without its redeeming nihilism and hopes of better institutions to come. And in America we find : in the North, France even more absolute than at home ; in the South, Spain more despotic than in Europe ; and even in the English colonies, which were destined thereafter to play so mighty a part in the enfranchisement of the human mind and in the development of free institutions, there was yet only the dim,

almost imperceptible redness of the coming dawn of liberty, the faintest suggestion of the glories that were to be. Over all the world there was naught but despotic sway and few symptoms of any possible melioration.

It was for such a world as this that Rousseau and Voltaire and the French thinkers reasoned. It was on such a world as this that Thomas Jefferson launched his declaration of human rights, and to such a world that he propounded his great doctrine of individual independence. It was while looking back over such a world as this that John Stuart Mill wrote his great work on *Liberty*, and in the contemplation of such a world that Herbert Spencer made his magnificent appeal for more liberal institutions and freer manhood. The issue then was between depotism and individualism, and in the face of that issue the doctrine of *laissez faire* was supremely right.

Times have changed. When the Declaration of Independence was written, George Stephenson was a boy in short trowsers; Fulton had never dreamed of a steamboat; the steam-engine was as crude as the overshot water-wheel; women were but just beginning to wear calico prints, and men were still clothed in homespun garments; the largest city in English-speaking America was about half the present size of Yonkers; houses were lighted only with tallow dips, and streets were not lighted at all; the log cabin and the adobe hut was the prevailing style of architecture throughout the greater part of what is now the United States, and the vast majority of the inhabitants lived in the most rural environment, a mile away from their nearest neighbors, each house a community unto itself; it made little difference to any one else if a man chose to live with unsanitary and unwholesome surroundings and kept his pig-sty under his parlor window; there was n't a Board of Health in all America; and I doubt if the first one had been established in Europe; there were only a dozen or so printing-presses in all the English colonies; and there was n't a dwelling in the world that had running water in it; the man who invented the electric telegraph had n't been born; Edison's great-grandfather was still a young man; the cotton gin had n't been dreamed of; the factory system was undeveloped; and co-operative methods of production were in their very infancy. Huxley's astinocracy under such conditions was not so very bad a government.

To-day, the world is coming more and more to live in its great cities. Everybody is dependent upon everybody else. Three millions of people are fed every day in this great metropolis with food that is brought thousands of miles by rail and water, from every part of the earth. We not only all use the same streets and the same public conveyances, but a community greater than the average town of old now often lives under the same roof and goes up the same stairs ; so that it becomes a matter of public concern even how the housewife cooks her dinner and hangs her clothes out to dry. Society in its organized capacity has to step in and protect itself in hundreds of ways where our forefathers needed no protection. We have to protect the Croton watershed and the Adirondack forests ; we have to grade and pave and light and sewer our streets ; we have to provide public parks for the recreation and amusement of the people. Production is carried on in great factories, employing thousands of men, and single corporations often have more people dependent upon the wages they pay than the total population of the largest State in the American Union at the time of the formation of our Government.

The doctrine of *laissez faire* may have been very well adapted to the needs of the world fifty or a hundred years ago, but it is altogether too narrow for the wants of the world of 1893.

The true watchword for to-day is not *laissez faire*, but *devriez le faire*, not "Let him do as he will," but "It must be done." What the world needs, it must get. It may be got by individual effort if it can be, but it must be got. And whatever the individual cannot do or will not do or whatever he cannot do as well, organized society—that is, the state—must do. "It is a condition and not a theory that confronts us," and it is action and not precept that we need most.

The doctrine of *laissez faire* puts the individual first and society second ; our changed conditions, our new life, and our complex civilization make it necessary to put society first and the individual second. The unit must yield to the mass. Man has to remain a pebble in the conglomerate. Society, under such conditions as now exist, cannot be held together by a rope of sand.

The question that confronts us to-night is not whether an eight-hour law was good for our ancestors, but whether it is good for us ;

not whether it was suited to the conditions of a hundred years ago, but whether it suits present conditions ; not whether it was sound philosophy in 1776, but whether it can be an ameliorating influence in 1893.

I think it can.

(1) An hour's labor is by no means the same thing now that it was when our country declared its independence.

In every branch of manufacturing, improved machinery and better processes have been invented and applied. A hundred years ago the hand-spinning wheel was in actual and not altogether unsuccessful competition with the power loom and the jenny. During that hundred years inventions have succeeded one another so rapidly that machinery often becomes out of date before workmen have learned how to use it. What is impossible one year becomes history the next. The factory system has grown to immense proportions and is everywhere taking the place of the small workshops and economizing human labor so that hours now count as much as days did before. The old industrial system compares in efficiency with the modern factory about as a lot of mountain bushwhackers with Grant's veteran army before Richmond.

Bessemer steel is produced from the ore with half the labor that it took to make pig-iron in George Washington's time. You can buy fine woollens now as cheap as you could common cotton sheetings then, and you can make silk to-day with almost as little labor as you could calico then. You can get friction matches enough for the use of a whole family for a year about as easy as you could light a single camp fire of the Revolutionary Army. Twenty pairs of fine shoes are now made at Lowell with less expenditure of muscle than the old shoemaker used upon one, and the Waterbury watch is so cheap that even bootblacks wear it, and yet it is a better timepiece than the wealth of all the Rothschilds could buy at the time their house was founded.

Agriculture is but little behind manufacturing. The cotton gin, harvesting machinery, and the gang plough have done most as much for the field as the steam-engine has for the factory. It used to take, under the best conditions, about two days' labor to produce a bushel of wheat ; now, on the Dalrymple Farm, in Dakota, and on some of

the California ranches, the labor of one man easily produces a thousand bushels in a few months. On the pampas of the Argentines, in Australia, and on the plains of Texas, one man now takes care of 5000 sheep, and ten pounds of wool are as easily produced and brought to market as was one pound in the olden days. Sugar is cheaper now than flour used to be. Mark Twain says he had to hire a cart in Havana to take home fifty cents' worth of oranges. And in order to prevent whiskey and tobacco from becoming altogether too plenty, the Government has to put a tax on their production of three or four times the original cost.

The bowels of the earth, no less than its surface, yield their abundance now with only a small fraction of the labor that was formerly necessary. Coal is so cheap, despite the combinations of the barons and the fact that the Vanderbilts have bought out Lackawanna and are flirting with Reading, that the use of wood as a fuel is disappearing even in the most rural districts, and six cents' worth of petroleum furnishes more and better light for our winter firesides than did a dollar's worth of old tallow dips. And last of all, Mr. Edison, whose dreams of to-day become world history to-morrow, threatens us with an invention that will make protoplasm direct from dirt, turn all the mud of the Everglades into wholesome food, and enable Delmonico to set his table with delicious viands extracted from the peat swamps of Massachusetts.

Transportation facilities have been revolutionized during the period we are now considering. The railroad and the steamboat have reformed the face of the world and made an interchange of products between all the nations of the earth easy and cheap. Europe is fed from the farms of Dakota and India. I dined last summer in London on New Zealand mutton, which was so plentiful in the markets that an English sheep had no chance at all; and Nellie Bly goes round the world in about the same time and with much less fatigue than John Adams could go from Massachusetts to the Capitol to be inaugurated President. monstrous Georgia watermelons sell in New York City for ten cents apiece, and a pound of tea from China can be bought for about the price of an hour's common labor. The world has virtually become one vast community. Men are all neighbors, and the products of all climes are within every one's easy reach.

Mr. Edward Atkinson and other economists and statisticians have used their pencil much upon this subject, and the general consensus of opinion is that, taking the average of all the realms of industry, the labor of one man to-day is as effective as was that of four men a hundred years ago, or in one hour to-day you can do the work of four hours then.

Don't you think that in this year of grace 1893, with all these inventions, and all these improvements, and all these economies in production and distribution, with what Guttenberg, Watt, Stephenson, Arkwright, Fulton, McCormick, Morse, Goodyear, and Pullman have done for us, and what our own Thomas A. Edison, greater than any of them, is doing, that the world can be well fed, properly clothed, and comfortably housed on eight hours' labor a day; especially if we can drive the drones from the hive and make that eight hours of labor universal?

(2) The trouble has latterly been, not so much that we have not produced enough, as that we do not divide it fairly.

I am very far from being a socialist. I have no proposition to make for an equal division or a re-division of property. I do not propose that we shall sit in judgment upon the last generation, make any effort to avenge their wrongs, if wrongs there be, or institute any reform which shall have, legally or morally, an *ex post facto* effect. I do not wish to raise the hue and cry, to create a panic among the holders of wealth, or even to put them on the anxious seat. History has made itself, and, as to the sins of the past, let them be answered for only before the Great Judge of all the world. Let us be easy with what has been, but valiant for the present and wise for the future. Let this generation, which inherits at the worst so much that is great and good, profit by the experience of its ancestors, take advantage of its changed environment and better opportunities, and provide, if it can, that hereafter the product of the toil of human hands shall be more fairly and equably divided among those entitled to share in it; and it need not worry over the mistakes of its predecessors, or attempt to undo what they have done.

When I say that there is not at present a fair division of the product of human labor, I am by no means claiming that the masses

of the people are worse off now than they were in former times ; that the laborer is absolutely poorer or that the general condition of humanity has been changed for the worse. Quite the contrary. The New England mechanic now lives better than did the mediæval king, Dennis Kearney on his sand lots has a better-fed audience than had Demosthenes at the foot of the Acropolis, and we have conveniences in the humblest tenements to-day that the proudest palaces might have envied, a few centuries ago. I am not prepared to say even that the poor man has relatively suffered, or that in the distribution of the good things of the earth, he gets a lesser *proportionate* share than he did in former times. I believe it is otherwise. The injustice which I assert exists now, is by no means a new thing, and modern conditions have not increased or accentuated it. In that respect the England of to-day compares quite favorably with the England of the Maiden Queen ; the Republic of President Carnot is immensely better than the kingdom of the great Louis ; Germany with its little Emperor and its Army bill is still way ahead of the Germany of the great Frederick ; and the United States of Benjamin Harrison and Grover Cleveland is an infinitely better place for even a poor man to live in than was the United States of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

What I claim is, not that the man who labors is worse off, either absolutely or relatively, than his predecessor, but that he is not as well off as he ought to be—and that is enough ; not enough to demand a revolution, not enough to warrant upsetting the foundations of society, not enough to necessitate war and bloodshed or any of those violent attempts to cure, which are quite as likely to kill, but enough to justify us in seeking in every way we can, through the quiet and peaceable methods which our institutions make so potent, to ameliorate the condition of the great masses of the people of this State and nation.

Though one hour's labor yields to-day more than did four hours a hundred years ago, the man who performs that labor does not get, himself, four times as much result. Let us see if we can help him get more.

The accumulation of wealth in moderate or even in very large amounts does not indicate an unhealthy or unjust social condition, if

that extraordinary wealth be the extraordinary reward paid for extraordinary services rendered the community. I do not begrudge in the least the fortune that I hope will finally, despite his business misfortunes and disastrous associations, crown the career of Thomas A. Edison. I do not begrudge the Vanderbilts their money, for I remember it was the work of the great founder of their family that makes bread and meat so cheap in New York to-day. Mr. Rockefeller, whose methods are certainly subject to criticism, has nevertheless made kerosene so cheap that light is abundant even in the humblest home. And Jay Gould, the Rob Roy of American railroads, like the Rob Roy of the Highlands, used his opportunities for good as well as for evil. The world can well afford to pay munificently for great services—but it cannot afford to pay without getting the service or to persist in a policy which makes one man do the work and lets another reap the reward.

I am willing to concede that some—yes, that many—of the present large fortunes in this country have been fairly earned by those who originally possessed them (I am trying to earn one for myself) ; but I think it will have to be conceded, on the other hand, that there are yet more fortunes unearned than earned, and that a great part of the wealth that has been accumulated in this country during the last thirty years has been at the expense of the men who did the work. Pennies have been taken from the daily wages of thousands of laborers in order to gild one millionaire's Fifth Avenue mansion. A portion of the money which the laborer has earned, has gone, not to him in the way of wages, but to others in the way of rewards for unjust monopolies, licenses, privileges, and discriminations ; and these so abundant private fortunes, for which the owners have given little or no return to the community in which they live, are all made up of unpaid wages, of earnings that went into the wrong man's pocket.

A social condition which makes this possible should be remedied, if any remedy can be found.

(3) I think it can.

I do not believe in unfailing nostrums for diseases of the body nor in sovereign remedies for political or social ills. With the body corporal, it is often the case that nature and time can do more than

physicians to cure the patient; and so, in the body politic wrongs tend in a measure to cure themselves. Just the same, there are drugs which aid nature in curing the body, and there are public measures and political policies that accelerate the march of progress and aid in the evolution of civilization.

Legislation cannot do everything, but it can do something. It formulates public opinion as well as it is formulated by it. The state is the organized social power. It should be but the reflex image of the people, a composite photograph in which is blended their individual wisdom and aspirations. It must be made to be, if it is not, wiser than any individual, for it combines, or should combine, the wisdom of all. It is the only organ through which the voice of the people can be legally expressed, and the policy which the people desire made effectual. If we of the State of New York and of the United States of America come to the conclusion that it is for the common weal that labor in factories, mines, and workshops be limited to eight hours a day, it is right that the State should so declare it, as the formal voice of the people, and that the power of the State should enforce the declaration.

(4) Legislation of this nature is by no means unprecedented. The men who will oppose this particular statute most vehemently are the very men who are profiting most by statutes of the same kind.

There has been, for uncounted centuries, legislation untold in favor of property and the property owner. Legislation, or that general consensus of public opinion which, expressed or unexpressed, makes law, is at the basis of all property. The property owner has a law which places at his service the whole organized power of the state—its sheriffs, its posse comitatus, its militia, and even its army—to enforce a simple debt. He has legislation which confirms in him a monopoly of portions, larger or smaller, of the surface of the very planet on which we live, the common heritage of all humanity. If need be, policemen and constables will stand at his gate, and club or shoot down people who attempt to enter. With a judgment in ejectment he can command the power of the county and the army and the arms of the state. On an execution in trespass he can lock up his simple brother-citizen who dared to step on his sacred domain. Courts stand ready to protect his possessions, however ill acquired, from the assault

of any one who would take them from him, and jails and prisons yawn for people who do not properly distinguish between *meum* and *tuum*.

I am not complaining of such laws. They have been found necessary to incite individual industry, encourage skill and invention, promote frugality, and accelerate the march of civilization. They are undoubtedly yet necessary ; perhaps they always will be. The world needs the best services its brightest minds can render, and to get the services it has to pay the highest rewards. Nevertheless, it is legislation in favor of the property owner, and legislation which alone makes property possible. There is no sacredness in property rights. We have not dethroned kings simply to transfer the mantle of divinity to the property owner. Ownership is but a conventional phrase, expressing the result of what the law creates, and the same power which made laws and statutes in favor of property can repeal them. Property *is*, only because the community has decided that it is for the best interests of the masses of the people that it should be ; and when this same people find, if ever they do, that they can enjoy more of the good things which the earth has to give without the individual monopoly which is denominated "property," then property will cease to be.

Legislation in favor of property is right because, and only because, the people profit thereby. Legislation in favor of labor is equally right, if the people likewise profit by it.

Don't you think that after property has had so much it is time for labor to have a little inning of its own ?

If my reasoning so far is approved, the only question that remains is whether the proposed legislation will actually, in its effect, benefit the masses of the community, the people who always have done, and always will do the actual, manual labor which has to be done to provide the world with the food, clothing, shelter, and necessities and comforts of life which it needs.

I think it will.

We hear on every hand complaints of over-production.

Factories run a while and then stop and wait for consumption to catch up with them. Coal mines are worked night and day for a season, and then the mine owners manage to have a strike somewhere, and everything is shut down because there is too much coal in the

market. Wheat and corn are profitable crops one year, but the next year so much is raised that every bushel is produced at a loss, and the farmers, in their desperation, even use the golden ears of maize for their winter's fuel. Goods are often sold in immense quantities at auction at a bare fraction of their cost, and everywhere, from a suffering world, there comes, every now and then—I think it is more and more frequent—the insatiable demand for more money and less merchandise. The nations of the earth are engaged in a perpetual struggle, each to get its neighbor's gold into its own coffers, and to steal its neighbor's market for everything else. The cry from every land is for more gold and less goods. The manufacturer and the merchant are rich one day and poor the next ; but the banker is always king.

Amidst this royal abundance of everything that man needs, the laborer suffers for the very necessities of life. Employment is fitful, temporary, and inconstant. Scores of idle men swarm about the workshop on the bare suspicion of a single vacancy, and untold thousands of brawny and willing workmen are utterly unable to find work. What good is it if there be an abundance to be sold, if one is unable to buy ? What matters it how much you can get for a dollar, if you have n't the dollar to get it with ?

In the fable of old the unhappy victim of the Fates is immersed up to his lips in water, yet is dying of thirst, for not a drop can he drink ; so, to-day, thousands are starving amid store-houses filled with food to overflowing, and hungry children crowd the streets, though wheat is only sixty cents a bushel, and shiver, ill clad in winter's cold, while wool finds a poor market at twenty cents a pound.

Why is all this ?

I do not propose, to-night, to attempt to give you an exhaustive answer to the question. Many causes unite to produce effects, and the reasons which could be given for the existence of this unfortunate state of affairs are undoubtedly numerous. I will give you only one reason, and it is one which, I am satisfied, contributes much to produce the evil of which we complain.

Labor-saving inventions, improvements in machinery, and increased facilities for production have outgrown the naturally increasing demand for the products of human labor, and there has been reached such a

state of efficiency that if all workmen are employed during the ten, twelve, or fourteen hours of labor, each day, which is required of the factory or mine operative, more is produced than the world can use. Consequently a large portion of the men who are anxious and willing to labor can't get work. Reduce the hours of labor to eight, and there would be work enough to go all around. If not, then reduce it again to seven or six, and keep on till you get to the point where every man who wishes to work is needed ; and every man who can work, must.

You build Chinese walls along your national boundaries, you pass your McKinley bills, and by your high tariffs attempt to keep out the products of foreign nations, and all, as you say, to give the laborer here a better chance. Why should n't the hand that is laid so heavily upon foreign production gently touch the shoulder of the domestic producer and so regulate the industries of our own land as to give its laborers a fair chance to earn their daily bread. If the Government may go to such lengths as it does, to protect the man who works, against the competition of laborers thousands of miles away, may it not do something to save him from the infinitely more deadly effects of the competition of his own countrymen, right here, at home ?

You all know that I am *not* a believer in a protective tariff. I think it is designed not for the benefit of the many, but of the few, not to raise the price of labor, which is the commodity the laborer has to sell, but of other commodities that he has to buy, and that its only effect is to create and encourage monopolies and grind the faces of the poor.

I *am* in favor of regulating the hours of labor, because I believe in that way you can reach the true source of the evil, increase the demand for labor, give unemployed workmen a chance to work, and better the condition of the great struggling masses of humanity.

We hear a great deal about a higher and more general education of the people. It is a matter of such obvious public concern that the State founds schools, academies, and colleges, open to every child in the nation. It provides free libraries, museums of science, and galleries of art, so that every citizen of the community, however poor or humble, has the chance, if he had the leisure, to read the books of the greatest writers of all ages, to see the works of the greatest artists, and to learn all that is to be known of the world he lives in and the people of it.

This is all well, very well, so far as it goes ; but a school is of little use to a starving child ; libraries do not avail those who have no time to read ; and picture galleries are of little benefit to the man who works without cessation from early dawn till he lies down to sleep. With schools and books and facilities for culture there must go the ability and the leisure to use them, or they are worse than useless.

If the intelligence, education, and culture of the people is a necessary condition of the existence of free institutions—and there is no doubt of it—why may not the same power that provides the school and enforces compulsory attendance also insist upon that amount of leisure among the people without which there can be, at the best, only a low degree of intelligence, but little education, and a very small amount of culture. If you may compel the boy to go to school, why may you not compel the father to stop work early enough in the afternoon to have a little time to learn something himself ? If you may educate children for the benefit of the next generation, why may you not likewise insist upon giving the adults, who constitute the present generation, a little chance for themselves ? If you may build for the future, why may you not take a little care for the present ?

We have already seen that eight hours a day is enough to produce all that the world needs, while it is n't enough to exhaust all the vitality of the workman. It leaves him some little surplus of energy which he may expend upon his own improvement and culture and the amelioration of his condition.

We do a great deal for the public health ; we have our national, State, and municipal health boards ; we have a quarantine down the Bay, and a cholera prison at Fire Island ; we compel every man, woman, and child in the community to submit to vaccination ; we have pest-houses and hospitals, and the whole power of the State is used, if need be, to fight and ward off contagious disease ; we provide city and State, and even national parks, breathing spots and places of recreation ; we suppress nuisances and prevent the contamination of air and water ; we carefully drain and sewer our streets, and we burn people's houses and destroy whole villages upon the Croton watershed—all for the public health.

But the pure air of heaven can do more than all the health boards

of the nation. Eight hours a day in a factory leaves abundance of time outside and does little harm, while twelve or fourteen hours kills. Why provide parks unless there is to be leisure to use them, and why places of recreation and amusement if there is to be no time for aught except labor?

If eight hours of work is enough, and will produce all that the world needs while it does not impair the health of the workman, why should not the community, with firm and potent voice, say, "Eight hours shalt thou labor and no more." If pure air, exercise, and recreation are necessary to sustain the vitality of the body, why should not the State say that every citizen shall have a chance to breathe that air and take that exercise and recreation?

The health of a citizen of a republic is more than a private matter. Other people are concerned in it besides himself. Without it, he is unable to perform the duties of citizenship. Without it, he is unable to transmit a sound body or a sound mind to his offspring who are to become citizens hereafter. Without it he is unable to play his part in the drama of life and do his share towards the development of our civilization. Factories are often worse than cholera ships, and the foul air of the workshop may be more deadly than the smallpox. The same power that protects against the one may certainly mitigate the evils of the other.

The State concerns itself much about the public morals.

It is said that "Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do," but his Satanic Majesty has quite as good a chance with the man who has too much to do as with the man who has too little. The best citizen is he who has sufficient employment, but does not have to grind his life away at his daily toil. The evil of the present condition is not that there is in the aggregate too much or too little work to be done, but that it is too unevenly distributed. One man is working fourteen or sixteen hours a day, while his neighbor, who wants to work just as much, and perhaps is just as good a workman, is out of a job and does not do anything. The factory or mine operative works long hours, a portion of the time, and is doing nothing the rest. Half the year he is idle because he can't find work, and the other half discontented because he has to work too hard. Immorality thrives under such conditions.

Vice could ask for no better field, and if Beelzebub had done the planning himself, he could n't have planned it better for the Satanic kingdom. The woman who works twelve or fourteen hours a day must be a princely paragon of virtue if her tired nerves and discontented mind do not yield to the tempter. The man who sees no future except a succession of unremitting toil and enforced idleness, easily becomes a tramp and a law-breaker. Children brought up under such surroundings do not become virtuous and high-minded citizens, and the family so environed cannot become the bulwark against immorality and sin that the family ought to be.

An eight-hour law will not, all at once, make a heaven of earth or change fallen men to angels. It will not make a paradise of the Five Points, or altogether abolish sinfulness in the Tenderloin Precinct ; but I believe it will be an influence, and a strong influence, on the side of virtue and morality and a power for righteousness and right living.

But, it may be asked, if it be to the advantage of the laborer to decrease the hours of his labor, why cannot he limit himself, without the aid of the State ?

Perhaps he can, and perhaps he would. I have no doubt that he could and that he would if you give him time enough for the slow process of evolution to do its perfect work ; but the process would be a long and tedious one, there would be infinite suffering meantime, and the benefits would be long postponed. The whole community can do what has to be done, much quicker, much easier, and much better than a part of it can. The State is more powerful than the individual laborer and much stronger even than any labor organization can be. If the reform be a desirable one, and the world is ready for it, let 's get it as soon as we can, and by the easiest and quickest possible methods.

Nature will prune the tree if we leave it alone long enough, and the tree survives meantime ; but a wise application of the pruning knife will accomplish at once what nature can do only through long years of wasteful effort, and may save the tree when nature would n't. Nature will cure a wound, it may be, if the victim can stand her processes ; but it would be the height of folly for this reason to discard liniments and bandages. Civilization consists not in going contrary to nature, but in aiding her and improving upon her methods. It would

be futile to pass an eight-hour law, if the conditions were such that made an increase rather than a decrease in the hours of labor necessary ; but when we see that the economic and social conditions are such that fewer working hours are altogether possible, it may be the height of wisdom to accelerate the movement in that direction, by state regulation. Legislation, like the pruning knife, might be used to kill, but it may be available to cure.

I do not advocate the paternal theory of government. I think the individual may be trusted, generally, to know what is good for himself quite as well as the state can determine it for him, and that he can win, by his own efforts, what he individually must have better than the state can give it to him. But if we give free choice to the individual to select his avocation and mode of life, so far as it does not conflict with the general good of the community, we must likewise give the community the right to determine its policy and decide what is good for the social aggregate, where individual interests, prejudices, or ignorance conflict with the common weal.

The logic of legislation regulating the hours of labor rests upon the theory that the good of the community as a whole, more than that of any individual in it, demands the inauguration of such a policy ; that the perpetuation of our institutions, the amelioration of social conditions, and the general welfare of humanity require that amidst the civilization of this closing decade of the nineteenth century, midst all the inventions and improvements and superior methods of production which surround us, with all that we now have that our ancestors never dared to dream of, there should be more leisure, more intelligence, more education, more culture, more of all those things which make life worth living. And if the general restriction of the time of co-operative labor to eight hours a day makes the people happier and the world a better place to live in, the legislator who hesitates to do his duty in such an emergency is the worst enemy of the community in which he lives and of the people he is supposed to represent.

Let us, ladies and gentlemen of the Manhattan Liberal Club, be as good as the noble name you bear, and writing upon our flag the motto "Give the People a Better Chance," follow that banner wherever it may lead, be it to victory or defeat.

